

Sample complaint letter

It is not unusual to feel confused and uncertain when you believe something has gone wrong with the healthcare provided to you or a loved one. It is almost always best to discuss your concerns with your treating health professional first.

If you decide to put your complaint in writing, there are a number of factors that you will need to consider to enable the NHS body to investigate fully. This leaflet gives an overview of the key points to include.

If you have any further questions, please visit our website where you will find more advice and a range of specialised self-help guides, or call our helpline.



The **charity** for
patient safety and **justice**

AvMA is the charity for patient safety and justice. We provide specialist advice and support to people when things go wrong in healthcare and campaign to improve patient safety and justice.

For advice and information visit
www.avma.org.uk

Or call our helpline
*10am-3.30pm Monday-Friday
(03 calls cost no more than calls to
geographic numbers (01 or 02) and
must be included in inclusive minutes
or there can be a cost per minute)*

0345 123 2352



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Registered charity in England & Wales
(299123) and Scotland (SCO39683)

Your name
Your address
Telephone number

Date

1 Name of Organisation

Address

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Name, date of birth, NHS number

2 I am writing to complain about the treatment at:

3 Details of what happened and when

4 Details of why you are not happy

5 Specific questions you would like answered

6 Details of what you would like to happen next

7 Conclusion

8 Yours sincerely

1

ADDRESSEE

Depending on where the treatment you are complaining about took place, you should address your letter to:

- The chief executive of the hospital trust
- The chief officer of your clinical commissioning group
- The GP, dentist or practice complaints lead

2

PLACE AND DATE

List where the treatment took place and the date or dates of the incident(s).

3

DETAILS OF WHAT HAPPENED

Give details of what happened and the relevant dates if the complaint relates to more than one incident. Include the names and positions of everyone involved.

If you have very detailed information, such as diaries, it is best to summarise your complaint, listing the main points in date order in the letter and including further background information as enclosures.

If you are unable to recall events because you were undergoing surgery, include any information provided by third parties and explain how they were made aware of this.

4

WHY YOU ARE NOT HAPPY

Provide an explanation of why you are dissatisfied. For instance, if your complaint relates to an operation, you may wish to include whether you were warned of any complications, what explanations have been given and why you are not happy with this.

If you wish to complain about several matters list the most important first. Include all information that you feel will be relevant to your complaint.

5

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

Compile a list of questions you would like answered.

6

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Make it clear what you want to achieve as an outcome of your complaint – this could include an apology or a review of current procedures or reassurance that the same thing will not happen to anyone else. You can also request details of the treatment that you have received and ask to meet with staff.

You may wish to request further treatment which you feel would put the matter right or to ask for an independent clinical review of the treatment that you have received.

7

CONCLUSION

You may wish to conclude the letter in the following style:

"I would appreciate it if you would carry out a full investigation into my concerns and provide a full response in accordance with the NHS complaints procedure."

8

SIGNATORY

If you are complaining on behalf of someone else then they should also sign the letter. If they are unable to do so, such as a child or someone who is incapacitated or has died, then the next of kin should sign.

Be part of the movement for better
patient safety and justice

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AvMA's work
today



You can help make healthcare safer and fairer for all

Our vision is a simple: **People who suffer avoidable medical harm get the support and the outcomes they need.**

This vision is underpinned by four objectives, we believe, will transform trust in the NHS and healthcare generally and significantly cut the cost – financial and human – which is incurred annually in settling legal claims as well as dealing with the human costs associated with traumatic medical injuries and death. Our four key objectives are:

- To expand the range of communities we serve and so enabling more people experiencing avoidable harm to access services from us that meet their needs
- To empower more people to secure the outcomes they need following an incident of medical harm, whilst providing caring and compassionate support
- To eliminate compounded harm following avoidable medical harm
- To have the necessary diversity of sustainable resources and capacities to deliver

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action *against* medical accidents

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